

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Pío Pico State Historic Park

Historic Adobe Home of Last Governor Of Mexican California Restored

Grand Reopening Celebration Now Set

The Pío Pico Adobe, home of the last Governor of Mexican California and one of the last surviving examples of 19th century adobe construction in the Los Angeles region, has been restored and is now ready for a grand reopening ceremony to be held September 20, 2003.

“This adobe home,” said State Parks Acting Director Ruth Coleman, “is one of the most significant historical structures remaining in the state today. We are fortunate that this home has survived and we are now eager for all visitors, school children especially, to return to this irreplaceable historic resource to learn more about the Mexican heritage of our great state.”

Save the Date –September 20, 2003, 10 AM – 4 PM

The Grand Re-opening celebrates “Bringing Life Back to El Ranchito.” It will feature re-opening ceremonies, live music, community and food booths, activities for children, historic demonstrations, and tours of the Pío Pico adobe ranch house. The event is scheduled to begin at 10:00 AM and continue until 4:00 PM.

For more than 10 years, the adobe home, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, has been mostly closed to the public following extensive damage from the 1987 Whittier Narrows earthquake and the 1994 Northridge earthquake. During the past 3 years, a major renovation has been underway with workers implementing plans and designs to bring the Pío Pico Adobe and El Ranchito grounds back to their authentic condition during Pío Pico’s ownership. Extensive details were restored and two previously removed rooms reconstructed in order to enhance the historic integrity of the structure.

The result is that Pío Pico’s home has now been restored to its 1880’s splendor. In addition, an extensive historic landscape reconstruction and park renovation project has been underway. This effort has

included re-creating fruit orchards and colorful gardens in keeping with how the ranch appeared while Pío Pico still lived there.

Pío de Jesus Pico IV, (1801 – 1894), was one of California’s most fascinating historical figures, a natural politician, entrepreneur and bon vivant. His turbulent and interesting life encompassed almost an entire century. His ancestry reveals a mixture of ethnic heritage, including Spanish, Mexican, Native American, African and Italian. During his long and active life, he rose from poverty to become one of the richest men in California, acquiring more than 500,000 acres of property.

Pío Pico acquired the 8,891-acre Rancho Paso de Bartolo Viejo in 1848, named the land “El Ranchito” (the little ranch) and built the adobe home that has now been restored. He lived at various times in the adobe until 1892. The ranch was used for cattle grazing, and later as a farm for growing an assortment of crops, including wheat, corn, grapes, barley, oats and oranges. Today, Pío Pico State Historic Park is the only remaining property left of the original ranch.

Pío Pico was part of the government of Mexican California from about 1828. His involvement in California government eventually led to his position as Governor of Mexican California in 1832 and again from 1845 until the Americans occupied California in 1846. He witnessed and helped shape nearly a century of California history before his death in Los Angeles on September 11, 1894.

Joint Effort of Cities, County and State Gets Job Done

Funding for the Pío Pico State Historic Park renovation illustrates the creative and cooperative efforts of state and local government to make this project a reality. In 1993 California State Parks applied for Federal inter-modal transportation enhancement funds (ISTEA) to supplement the FEMA/Hazard Mitigation funds from the 1987 Whittier and 1994 Northridge Earthquakes to repair the damaged to Pico Adobe and enhance the transportation links to the Park. However, more funding was needed.

In an effort to find that funding, wide-ranging public support and local interest for the rehabilitation of the Pío Pico Adobe and park resulted in the formation of the Pío Pico State Historic Park Coalition in the early 1990s. The Coalition members included the adjacent cities of Whittier, Pico Rivera, Norwalk, and Santa Fe Springs, along with interested groups and members of the public, and elected representatives of local, county and state government.

The Coalition worked with County Supervisor Don Knabe and California State Parks to place a special bond act on the County ballot. In November 1996 Los Angeles County voters passed Proposition A. It included an allocation of \$2.5 million for “implementation of the General Plan of Pío Pico State Historic Park.”

As the representative of the Coalition, the City of Whittier negotiated a joint powers agreement (JPA) for use of these funds at Pío Pico State Historic Park. The Proposition A funds were allocated to complete improvements to the property not owned by the State (Property leased from the City of Whittier), including the removal of intrusive non-historic structures, reconstruction of the historic landscape, and construction of additional park and visitor facilities.

The City of Whittier also obtained additional Proposition A funds through the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for improvements to enhance park programs. California State Parks, representatives from then-Assemblywoman Grace Napolitano’s office, Governor Gray Davis, Senator

Martha Escutia and Assemblyman Robert Pacheco also helped secure additional state funding to complete the overall project.

“It is hard to imagine a more complicated effort than the one needed to coordinate all these individuals, groups and public agencies toward the goal of restoring this important historic place,” said Coleman. “And that is why we need to thank all concerned for an effort that stands as a model of cooperation, good government and good citizenship.”

The construction and restoration work on the adobe and grounds was completed in two phases, with each of the funding sources itemized as follows:

Adobe Restoration Phase

FEMA/Hazard Mitigation from 1987/1994 Earthquakes	\$387,680.00
California Transportation Commission (ISTEA)	\$947,582.00
Assembly Bill 2782 (97-98) – Grace Napolitano	<u>\$750,000.00</u>
<u>TOTAL</u>	\$2,085,262.00

Site/Landscape Restoration Phase

1996 LA Proposition A, LA Co. Supervisor Don Knabe	\$2,500,000.00
Proposition A – Santa Monica Mountains Conser.	\$400,000.00
Governor Gray Davis, Senator Martha Escutia and Assemblyman Robert Pacheco - 1999-2000 State Budget	<u>\$500,000.00</u>
<u>TOTAL</u>	\$3,400,000.00

<u>GRAND TOTAL</u>	<u>\$5,485,262.00</u>
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The park is located at 6003 Pioneer Boulevard, along Whittier and Pioneer Boulevards, just west of the 605 Freeway in Whittier.

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